



Natural Heritage &  
Endangered Species  
Program

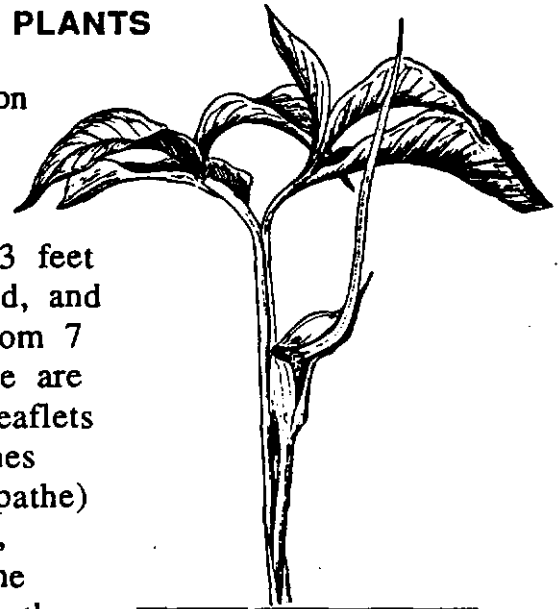
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife  
Route 135  
Westborough, MA 01581  
(508) 792-7270 ext. 200

MASSACHUSETTS THREATENED PLANTS

Green Dragon  
(*Arisaema dracontium* Schott)

Description


Green Dragon, a member of the Arum family, stands 1-3 feet (30-90 cm) tall. The leaf is usually solitary, long stalked, and up to 40 inches (1 meter) tall at maturity. There are from 7 to 13 dull green leaflets which narrow at the base; these are produced along one side of the leaf only. The central leaflets measure 4-8 inches (10-20 cm) long while the outer ones become successively smaller. The large green bract (spathe) enclosing the inflorescence is slender, erect, convoluted, pointed, and measures 1.2-2.4 inches (3-6 cm) long. The spike (spadix) which has its base surrounded by the spathe tapers to a long slender point and protrudes 2-4 inches (5-10 cm) beyond the spathe. Flowers at the base of the spadix are greenish-yellow and measure 4-8 inches (10-20 cm). A

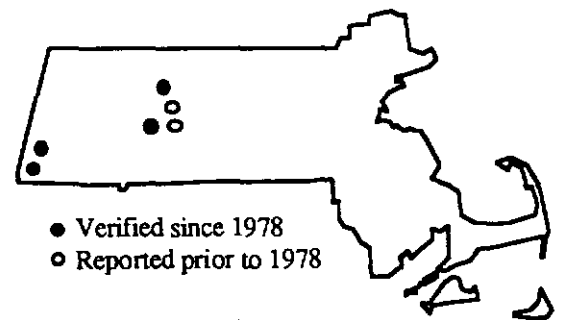


Gleason, H.A. The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern U.S. and Adjacent Canada New York Botanical Garden, 1952

population of Green Dragon may be all male or a combination of male and female (monoecious). Most young plants are male but an increase in size and age, poor soil, and low humidity may encourage the appearance of female parts and diminish the male structures proportionately. Berries are orange-red and stand atop the stem in Fall after the leaf has wilted. Flowering season is May-June.



 Range of Green Dragon



Massachusetts Distribution by Town

### Similar Species

Jack-in-the Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) resembles Green Dragon but has a more dominant hood (spathe) which overtops the short spadix. It has only three broad leaflets per leaf. Jack-in-the Pulpit is an uncommon member of floodplain forests. At one site in Massachusetts hybrids between the two species have been found, the only such population known.

### Habitat in Massachusetts

Green Dragon is found in floodplain woodlands, with open to filtered light, in moist alluvial sites with annual flooding, usually restricted to the low lands along large rivers. Surrounding plant life may include Silver Maple, Butternut, Cottonwood, Green Ash, Basswood, elm, Ostrich Fern, Wood Nettle, grasses, and sedges. Not infrequently Green Dragon occurs at the borders of small depressions that fill with water in Spring and slowly dry out.

### Range

Green Dragon is found from southwest Quebec to Minnesota south to Florida and Texas.

### Population Status

Green Dragon is listed as "Threatened" in Massachusetts. There have been 8 recent (after 1978) verified occurrences and 4 historical (before 1978) occurrences. Within its limited habitat, Green Dragon may be out competed by Ostrich Fern. Its rarity is most likely attributable to extensive loss of its habitat to agricultural development. Green Dragon is considered a rare species in New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Delaware, North Carolina, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Quebec, and Ontario.